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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DJIBOUTI 001553

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SUBJECT: SOMALILAND FOREIGN MINISTER SEEKS INTERIM STATUS
FROM U.S.

Classified By: AMBASSADOR MARGUERITA D. RAGSDALE.
REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

1. (C) Edna Ismail Aden, Foreign Minister of Somaliland, told Ambassador December 5, during their meeting at the Sheraton Hotel, that Somaliland is interested in reviving "interim status" recognition for Somaliland first discussed and considered during the waning days of the Clinton Administration. Such a status, she said, would give Somaliland greater security, provide access to international financial institutions, provide eligibility for development assistance, enable Somaliland to refine its credibility, and give Somaliland "acceptable" passports. "We want," Aden said, "to be brought in from the cold."

2. (C) Aden, on a December 3-5 visit to Djibouti, requested the meeting with Ambassador and was accompanied by Abdillahi M. Duale, Somaliland's Minister of Information and National Guidance. Aden and Duale had earlier met with President Guelleh. Aden told Ambassador that she raised with Guelleh Somaliland's interest in "revival" of the "interim status" concept with the U.S. and that Guelleh had "supported" them. Despite Ambassador's probing, Aden was less clear on how that interim status would unfold or its implications. Was she anticipating, for example, some type of informal recognition or agreement?

3. (C) Aden replied that "interim status" could take any form. The important point, she said, was that U.S. action would likely lead others to take similar steps. She said a number of western countries had told her that they did not want to be the first to recognize Somaliland and likened Somaliland to a "beautiful woman that no one wanted to marry."

4. (C) Ambassador noted the U.S. and African Union positions to date, including that of Djibouti, which supported the concept of a Somali whole, rather than a cantonized entity. She said Abdillahi Yusuf appeared to be making efforts to put together a government, although he had not yet returned to Somalia. Did Somaliland see possibilities in working with Yusuf as the new interim President? Aden replied in the negative, and insisted that Yusuf is an individual who will never have the support of Somaliland's people. The wounds are too deep, she said. (Comment: She showed Ambassador photos which she believed illustrated the atrocities that Yusuf had committed against Somaliland that could not be forgotten. End comment) She continued that Yusuf is an individual who speaks positively, but behaves quite differently. He is a "trigger-happy" character who lacks the ability to control others, including his own relatives. Moreover, she said, Yusuf continues to talk as if Somaliland should bear some of the blame for its own suffering at his hands, an unfathomable notion. There is no one in the current crop of warlords, Aden said, "to whom Somaliland can safely be wedded."

5. (C) Returning to the theme of Somaliland's worthiness for "interim status," Aden said Somaliland was "a model country" for democracy in the region. It has a controlled army, the diaspora is returning in large numbers, there are no arrears in salaries, no hunger and no malnutrition. In addition, Somaliland has worked feverishly in the global war on terrorism. She said that she had solicited help from Camp Lemonier, through the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA), on coastal and border security for Somaliland. President Guelleh considered it a "good idea" that Somaliland send someone to Djibouti to work directly with CJTF-HOA to train in border security techniques. This is important, she said, in view of efforts by Yemen to destabilize Somaliland, in cooperation with Abdillahi Yusuf. Aden accused Yemen of providing arms to Yusuf and of paying USD 2 million to help Yusuf get elected as interim Somali president. She said Yemeni arms had already been used against Somaliland in recent clashes around Las Anod.

6. (C) As for the African Union, Aden said she hopes to meet soon with President Obasanjo of Nigeria to discuss Somaliland's future and particularly the seat of Somalia in international organizations. Somaliland had put forward several ideas on this score.

17. (C) Aden and Duale were on their way back to Somaliland following a trip to Europe, where Aden said they had discussed the October Stockholm meeting on Somalia. Aden and Duale had asked the EU that a portion of resources allocated to Somalia be also shared with Somaliland.

RAGSDALE